RESEARCH BRIEF

SELECTION AND PROMOTION PROCEDURES IN ONTARIO SCHOOL BOARDS

Professionalism in Schools Series

DONALD MUSELLA
STEVE LAWTON

This research project was funded under contract
by the Ministry of Education, Ontario.
It reflects the views of the authors and not
necessarily those of the Ministry.

The Honourable Sean Conway, Minister
Bernard J. Shapiro, Deputy Minister

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The Honourable Sean Conway, Minister
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study, conducted under contract with the Ontario Ministry of Education, was to describe and assess the current state of selection and promotion systems in Ontario school boards. Through this study, the researchers sought to produce an information base for use in subsequent developmental activities with the parties most responsible for and most affected by selection and promotion procedures. This was to be achieved by identifying high quality procedures, defined as those procedures which provide the most effective and efficient means for identifying the candidates with the greatest potential for success on the job, while, at the same time, ensuring that subjectivity and bias are eliminated (or reduced substantially) as factors influencing the decision.

Data collection involved three phases: (1) the collection from all Ontario boards of existing policies, procedures and instruments for the selection and promotion of persons to positions of department chair, vice-principal, principal, superintendent and director; (2) the administration of a questionnaire survey to teachers, department chairs, principals, superintendents, directors and trustees to determine the extent of implementation, the perceived effectiveness, and candidates' satisfaction with the procedures employed at the present time; and (3) the development of two case studies with systems which represent models of high quality procedures.

The documentation data of phase one yielded the following results:

1. a greater proportion of public boards had some documentation for selection and promotion procedures than did separate boards,
2. the documentation for principals and vice-principals is more prevalent than for other positions,

3. most of the boards had only recently formalized (documented) their procedures,
4. practically all the separate boards reported no recent significant changes to procedures,
5. most directors believe their board's procedures are effective, and
6. a large number of public boards and very few Roman Catholic boards indicated no intention to change present procedures.

A summary of the results of the questionnaire data indicated that the appointment process for all positions was quite similar in that the information collected included application letter (and/or form), résumé, references, statement of philosophy of education, and recommendations from the previous and/or present supervisor. Criteria considered to be most important for all positions were interpersonal skills, knowledge of the position (role), and "appropriate" philosophy of education. With the exception of the department chair, which ranked teaching skills and knowledge of subject highest, management skills and decision-making skills also were considered very important for all administrative positions.

When the key independent, intervening, and dependent variables identified in the questionnaire were collated, consistent evidence emerged as to the importance of many of the procedural matters, such as following policy in practice, making criteria available, and holding debriefing sessions for candidates, and about the types of information that are more useful, e.g., references and supervisor's reports.

The ideal model is one that adheres to the criteria of validity and reliability in the use of information, and of practicality and efficiency in the use of human resources. Further, it must include procedures that take into account the unique political, historical and cultural aspects of the particular board. With these criteria in mind, and relying on the data generated in this study, as well as that

taken from research and professional writings, recommendations were made which can be applied to any of the school boards in Ontario.

Recommendation 1

Each board should develop, and communicate widely among its staff and trustees, policies and procedures for the selection and promotion of persons to all positions of added responsibility.

Recommendation 2

Each board should include training programs for all those involved in selection and promotion procedures.

Recommendation 3

Each board should include training programs for all those who are in positions of added responsibility, as well as those who are interested in an administrative career with the board.

Recommendation 4

Each board should develop procedures for including additional input in the choice of criteria to be used in selections and promotions. Further, when appropriate, the inclusion of representatives from lower level personnel in the decision-making procedures should be undertaken.

Recommendation 5

Each board should make every attempt to ensure that valid and reliable information is used in assessing and judging candidates. This can be achieved by discarding procedures which rely on subjective judgements, and installing procedures which reduce opportunity for subjectivity and bias.

Recommendation 6

Each board should undertake pro-active recruiting and pre-application training opportunities which increase chances that qualified women will apply for the supervisory and administrative positions.

In summary, many persons in some boards are pleased with what has been going on. There are others who are in the process of making changes, many of which are related to the recommendations listed above. With the rapid increase in the number of openings in positions of added responsibility, it can be anticipated that the improvement of selection and promotion procedures will become a high priority for all boards. It is hoped that the results of this study, along with the recommendations emerging from the data and the writings of professional educators, will assist those interested in evaluating, and, if necessary, changing their policies and procedures for selection and promotion.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For any research study to be successful, the co-operation of source participants, that is, the providers of information, is essential. A sincere thanks goes without saying to this group -- the 1,253 classroom teachers, department heads, vice-principals, principals, superintendents, directors, and trustees from 31 school boards, who took the time to complete questionnaires, and to the directors of the 99 boards which submitted their board policy and procedure documents. A special thanks to those trustees and staff of the two case-study boards who allowed us to obtain in-depth information through extensive interviews.

The research itself involved several individuals in special roles. George Knill and John Kenny, Education Officers of the Ontario Ministry of Education, provided a critical review of materials and thoughtful guidance. Bill Postl gave expert assistance in preparing data for computer-assisted analysis.

A key person in the research study was Research Officer Joyce Scane. Her well-appreciated contributions included assistance in the development of data collection procedures, the collection of data, including interviews, the analysis of data, and the preparation of reports. Her management of the project activities added significantly to the efficiency of the research process.

Secretarial services were provided by Elaine Tanenzapf, who assisted in the development of all materials, including the final report and Deborrah Howes, who helped in keying much of the data.

In summary, both the quality of the work and the co-operation and commitment of the team members speak the team effort.

Donald Musella
Steve Lawton

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe and assess the current state of selection and promotion systems in Ontario school boards. The study, conducted under contract with the Ontario Ministry of Education, sought to produce an information base for use in subsequent developmental activities with the parties most responsible for and most affected by selection and promotion procedures. This was to be achieved by identifying high quality procedures, defined here as those procedures which provide the most effective and efficient means for identifying the candidates with the greatest potential for success on the job, while, at the same time, ensuring that subjectivity and bias are eliminated (or reduced substantially) as factors influencing the decision.

In this study, selection and promotion systems are procedures used by those in school boards responsible for placing persons in supervisory and administrative positions. The positions included are department chair, vice-principal, principal, superintendent and director of education.

The scope of the research called for in the contract set out six objectives:

1. To collect existing policies, procedures and instruments for the selection and promotion of persons to supervisory and administrative positions from all Ontario school boards;
2. To develop a typology of selection and promotion systems describing the distribution among Ontario school boards;

3. To conduct a survey of teachers, department chairs, vice-principals, principals, supervisory officers and trustees in a representative sample of boards to determine the extent of implementation, the perceived effectiveness, and candidates' satisfaction with procedures employed at the present time;
4. To develop a statistical report describing and analysing survey results;
5. To develop two case studies of boards with systems representing models of high quality procedures;
6. To prepare a technical report and a research brief including a set of recommendations for developing and implementing high quality procedures.*

Background of the Problem

Five situational factors bear on the need for this study.

Firstly, according to many practicing educators, the selection of administrators and supervisors is one of the most important personnel decisions the school board can make. For example, the literature strongly indicates the significance of the school principal in affecting the quality of schooling.

Secondly, the demand for accountability, the "search for excellence" in schooling remains a strong commitment for many of those who have assumed responsibility for improving the quality of schooling. The selection of "leaders" is seen as critical in this respect.

* The technical report is available on microfiche from the Ontario Government Bookstore.

Thirdly, the number of openings in positions of responsibility will increase substantially in the next ten years in Ontario. Those promoted in the boom of the late 60's and early 70's will be retiring. Some boards expect a complete turnover of personnel in these positions during this period.

Fourthly, the demands for increased adherence to human rights codes will increase. The need for selection and promotion procedures which lead to decisions based on qualifications and competence, while eliminating bias, subjectivity and discrimination, will be increasingly important.

Finally, little is known about the current state of practice of selection and promotion procedures in Ontario. Many senior administrators are looking for information to assist them in improving present practices.

These five conditions point to the need for a survey of the current situation, along with recommendations leading to high quality selection and promotion systems.

Design of the Study

For the most part, this study was treated as an exploratory study where each stage was built on previous stages.

Data collection for the study involved three phases: (1) the collection from all Ontario boards of existing policies, procedures and instruments for the selection and promotion of persons to positions of department chair, vice-principal, principal, superintendent, and director; (2) the administration of a questionnaire survey to teachers, department chairs, principals, superintendents, directors and trustees to determine the extent of implementation, the perceived effectiveness,

and candidates' satisfaction with the procedures employed at the present time; and (3) the development of two case studies with systems which represent models of high quality procedures.

Framework for the Study

To assist in organizing the data, a framework was developed which listed the key elements of selection and promotion procedures. The elements identified were as follows:

1. Training programs provided by school boards for those who aspire to positions of responsibility.
2. The application process, including the information requested on the application form.
3. The critieria used for acceptance at each screening decision point.
4. The type of information requested and obtained on the applicant.
5. The position description and the set of expectations provided to applicants.
6. The procedures and personnel used at each screening decision point.
7. The use of feedback and follow-up procedures for applicants, including post-selection training for successful applicants.

In addition to the elements of the selection and promotion systems, information was obtained with respect to the (1) existence of board policies and procedures, (2) perceived degree of implementation of board policies and procedures, (3) perceived effectiveness of these policies and procedures, and (4) ideal policies and procedures, as perceived both by those recently promoted and those recently involved in the promotion process.

CHAPTER 2

ANALYSIS OF BOARD POLICY

The first phase of the study was designed to provide an information base on the extent, the distribution, the diversity and the perceived effectiveness of existing policies for the selection and promotion of individuals to positions of responsibility.

Method of Data Collection

In Aprii and May of 1985 a letter was sent to the director of education of each of the 77 public and 49 Roman Catholic school boards. The letter requested copies of selection and promotion procedures and policies which were used to promote and select people for positions of responsibility, i.e., department chair, vice-principal, principal, superintendent and director of education. If there was little or no documentation, the boards were requested to describe the system in use. Included with this letter was an abstract describing the research project and a brief two-page questionnaire.

The questionnaire requested current enrolment figures, historical data on past and present procedures, the perception of the director (or the person replying to the questionnaire) concerning the success of these procedures, and information about current plans to revise the procedures.

Replies (questionnaires and/or relevant documents) were received from 99 school boards out of a possible 126. Of these 99 which responded, 62 were public school boards and 37 were separate school boards.

In response to the correspondence and the survey questionnaire sent to the boards, those boards which replied did one or more of the following: (1) returned the questionnaire, (2) described or gave more information about their procedures in a letter, (3) sent what documentation they had about their procedures. Some boards replied that they had documented procedures, but they did not send them or the documentation they supplied was not for selection and promotion procedures of the requested categories of personnel, but rather, for example, policies for hiring teaching staff. Table 1 shows the kind of response received from the boards.

Table 1: Whether Selection and Promotion Procedures are Documented By Type of Board

	Public (n=62)		Separate (n=37)		Total (n=99)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
No documentation for any category	21	33.9	24	62.2	45	45.6
Procedures undocumented but described in a letter	17	27.4	8	21.6	25	25.2
Documentation of some kind	41	66.1	13	35.1	54	54.5

The documentation referred to in Table 1 ranges from one-sentence statements to detailed descriptions of procedures for some or most positions.

Summary

In summary, the documentaton data yielded the following results: (1) a greater proportion of public boards had some documentation for selection and promotion procedures than did separate boards, (2) the documentation for principals and vice-principals was more prevalent than for other positions, (3) most of the boards had

only recently formalized (documented) their procedures, (4) practically all the separate boards reported no recent significant changes to procedures, (5) most directors believed their board's procedures were effective, and (6) a large number of public boards and very few Roman Catholic boards indicated an intention to change present procedures. The strength of these results, however, is weakened somewhat by the low number of responses to the question of effectiveness of procedures.

While it is difficult to generalize about the policies, it is probably fair to say that they tend to be more concerned with procedure (and procedural due process) than substance (and substantive due process): they emphasize how the process is carried out and the sharing (or not sharing) of power, sometimes to the neglect of the quality of data being used.

CHAPTER 3

SURVEY RESULTS

Procedures for Selecting Sample

The selection of the initial sample of 30 boards was made from the 99 school boards who had responded to the first letter requesting information about their selection and promotion procedures. These boards were then classified into the following categories: public and separate; central and not central; and those with well developed, somewhat developed and undeveloped or no procedures. Subsequently, the decision was made to enlarge the sample to 32 boards by adding the additional region of Metropolitan Toronto since boards from this area had not been randomly selected. Therefore, two boards were randomly selected from among the Metro Toronto boards.

Each board which agreed to participate was asked to indicate the approximate number of persons who were selected or promoted to each of the positions of added responsibility (department chair, vice-principal, principal, superintendent, director) within the past five years, and the approximate number of persons who were involved in these promotion procedures within the past two years.

Summary of Results

One thousand, two hundred and fifty-three questionnaires from 28 boards were received. Participants included 354 department chairs, 294 vice-principals, 240 principals, 59 superintendents, and 11 directors of education, all of whom had been

selected for these positions within the past five years, plus 295 from those who had been involved in the selection of persons for positions of responsibility.

The appointment process for all positions was quite similar in that the information collected included application letter (and/or form), résumé, references, statement of philosophy of education, and recommendations from the previous supervisor.

The criteria considered to be most important for all positions were interpersonal skills, knowledge of the position (role), and "appropriate" philosophy of education. With the exception of the department chair, which ranked teaching skills and knowledge of subject highest, management skills and decision-making skills also were considered very important for all administrative positions.

Although the quality of the selection process was considered quite positive for all positions, a high percentage of respondents indicated the need for change in their board's present procedures. The recommendations for change included the following: (1) in-service training for those involved in the selection process, (2) development and implementation of more comprehensive selection policies and procedures, (3) implementation of leadership programs for those who aspire to positions of responsibility, (4) greater input from teachers, principals, and parents in the selection process, and (5) greater adherence to affirmative action guidelines at all levels of the process.

CHAPTER 4

EFFECTIVE PROMOTION PROCEDURES

Methods of Analysis

In order to determine what characteristics were associated with the more successful promotion procedures, correlational analyses were carried out for aggregate statistics calculated for the school boards participating in the study.

Three steps were involved in this analysis. First, a set of items in the questionnaire was identified which measured either characteristics of the promotion process (these were termed independent variables), the impact of the selection procedures on the candidates (these were termed intervening variables) or the effectiveness of the procedures as perceived by the respondents (these were referred to as dependent variables).

After identification of variables, aggregate statistics were calculated for each school board. Aggregate statistics are statistics based on the responses of all individuals in a board who completed the questionnaire. In this case, they were either percentages or means.

Finally, correlations were calculated between the different types of variables: independent variables with intervening variables, intervening with dependent variables, and independent with dependent variables. By this process, one can come to understand the sequence of effects from the first stage of the process to the last. As a by-product of this analysis, overall means and average percentages are calculated for each of the variables.

The independent variables for this analysis included the following items:

Practice follows policy

Workshops on selection process

Notification by personal call

Use of supervisors' reports

Use of references

Use statement of philosophy

Availability of criteria

Trustees as interviewers

Director as interviewer

Principals as interviewers

Post-conference available

Held post-conference

Number of interviews

Length of interviews

Intervening variables included:

Competence of interviewer

Threatening situation (inverse)

Sincerity of feedback

Constructiveness of criticism

Good feeling at end

Fairness of procedures

Seriousness of selection committee

Impact of affirmative action

Openness of process

Relevance of criteria to performance

Standards known

Number of sources of data

Rigour of data collection process

Quality of follow-up

The dependent variables included an assessment, in the view of the respondents, of how effective the process was at selecting the best individuals and of how good the procedures were overall.

Correlational analyses were conducted to assess the apparent effectiveness of promotion practices for the positions of principal, vice-principal, and department head. There was an insufficient number of respondents to conduct similar analyses for practices used in selecting superintendents and directors.

Conclusion

From the analyses of data, it can be concluded that there are a number of practices which are generally associated with more effective promotion policies, and that there are a few about which different opinions are held. The practices which seem most consistently associated with good procedures are as follows: (the letters representing the analyses on which the practice was found to have a positive relationship: p = principal, v = vice-principal, c = department chairperson, and m = promotion committee member)

- practice follows policy (p, v, m)
- workshops are held on policy (p)
- supervisors' reports as source of data (p, v, m)

- references as source of data (p, c, m)
- statement of philosophy required (p, v)
- criteria are available (p, v)
- directors participate in interview (p, c)
- debriefing sessions available (v, c)
- debriefing sessions held (p, v, m)
- interviews of some length (p, v)
- multiple interviews held (v)
- notification in person (c).

Practices about which there appear to be contradictory perceptions are:

- trustees as interviewers (c-, m+)
- principals participation as interviewers (p+, m-).

It appears, then, that there is consistent evidence as to the importance of many procedural matters, such as following policy in practice, making criteria available, and holding debriefing sessions for candidates, and about the types of information that are more useful, e.g., references and supervisors' reports.

However, while there seems to be agreement that the direct participation of the director in interviews helps to make a promotion process more effective, the participation of trustees in the process is not supported by the analysis of the views of department chairpersons, nor is participation by principals supported by the analysis of the views of promotion committee members. From the present analysis it is not possible to account for these divergent findings, though they suggest that there is a tension between the internal managers of schools and school systems and trustees.

CHAPTER 5

BOARDS WITH EFFECTIVE PROMOTION PROCEDURES

Two boards were selected for an in-depth study, one public board of education and one Roman Catholic separate school board. Each was selected as the site of a case study of promotion and selection procedures primarily because questionnaire respondents, who had been promoted or had been involved in the promotion process, rated its procedures highly in comparison to respondents in other Ontario school boards.

A brief summary of the results of the study of each board is presented.

Kennedy Roman Catholic Separate School Board

The strengths of the Kennedy RCSSB promotion procedures can be summarized as follow.

- Procedures are clearly focused on obtaining the best candidates.
- Multiple sources of information are sought.
- Broad participation in selection interview teams exists.
- An emphasis on co-operative work places the board's interests above those of individuals.
- Criteria are well developed and clearly communicated for most roles.
- Promotion processes are perceived as fair.
- Although an affirmative action program is being implemented, recent appointments reflect a fair proportion of women candidates and signal efforts to improve performance in this area.

- The Leadership Identification Program is an innovative method for ensuring valid assessment of administrative skills.
- A clear emphasis on the Catholic Christian beliefs and values ensures that administrators who are selected support the mission of the school system.

Possible areas for change, as suggested by interviewees and respondents to questionnaires, include

- improved process for selection of department heads,
- more involvement of principals in the improvement and, possibly, operation of the Leadership Identification Program,
- improved programs for developing administrative skills and knowledge at all levels to ensure a supply of qualified internal candidates for administrative positions,
- greater involvement of francophone teachers in development and operation of promotion policies,
- implementation of affirmative action and equality of opportunity programs, and
- a long-term staff placement and replacement plan.

Given the problems of growth and adding secondary education to the board's programs, it is perhaps surprising the care and attention that has been given to the question of promotion and selection in the Kennedy RCSSB. This emphasis reflects the priority placed on the area by the director, who has a direct veto over all administrative placements. Yet, as far as we could determine, this veto power is not formally exercised because the processes that have been developed emphasize broad participation and consensus. These same norms were evident in the process the board followed in its selection of the director. Indeed, we would suggest the

following characteristics set this board's selection process apart from most in the province:

1. it emphasizes the collegial nature of administration;
2. it allows for broad participation in the selection process and/or provision of information;
3. it incorporates an assessment approach that limits the use of personal influence in selection of administrators; and
4. there is a close relationship of practice to policy.

None of the changes that we see as being appropriate for consideration are inconsistent with the norms and values of the board; indeed, the lack of fit between the Leadership Identification Program (LIP) and the board's norms seems to be a source of tension, and resolution of this tension seems to be the central issue as far as promotion processes are concerned. At the same time, that the board's (and its students') interests may not always coincide with the career and professional interests of teachers is an issue that needs discussion. It appears that the two can be made to coincide more closely through the development of a systematic plan of career development. Even if this is not the case, a better understanding of the issue can only result in better sense of the moral justification underlying policies that may result in the selection of external candidates more often than some aspirants would prefer.

A quote from the Director summarizes the board's position: "We are hiring the best school administrators in the province. We're looking toward the future. This board is not going to make the mistake so many did during the fifties and sixties, and promote just anybody: it's not fair to the students, it's not fair to the public. We don't want to be stuck with mediocre administrators, promoted just because they were in the right place at the right time."

Livingstone Board of Education

If you were to eavesdrop on one of the many meetings being held in the Livingstone Board office in early spring you might hear one of the superintendents asking a question of one of the candidates for the principalship: "If you were to become principal of one of our secondary schools next year, how would you divide your time, that is, if we were to examine your use of time after one year, what percentages of time would have been allocated to the major activities you had undertaken?" While the candidate was responding to the question, the others in the room, two women trustees and two superintendents, would be taking notes and thinking of how this candidate compares to the previous three candidates. Also, one might find a principal in the room who is listening attentively to the candidate. This principal is thinking: "I hope he does justice to my advocacy of him for promotion." The questioning goes on until the superintendent chairing the session says, "Thank you for coming. Do you have any questions to ask us before you go?"

This is one of the many interviews being held in the Livingstone Board of Education this and every year with those who aspire to positions of greater responsibility: department chair of the secondary school, vice-principal (elementary and secondary school), principal (elementary and secondary school) and, less frequently, superintendent, and even less frequently, the director of education.

The selection procedures used by the Livingstone Board of Education are seen as effective by those who have been promoted and those who have been involved in the selection process. The strengths of the set of procedures used for all positions are many. However, some aspects do stand out:

- Information given to applicants and to all those involved in the procedures is complete, fully communicated within the board, and clearly understood.
- Criteria and procedures, including role of those involved in making screening decisions, are communicated and clearly understood.
- In general, the same criteria and procedures apply to all applicants.
- Affirmative action, although not policy, is practised successfully.
- Training programs are available to ensure a qualified pool of applicants for the positions of principal, vice-principal and department head.
- Male/female balance in numbers is achieved on final interview committees.
- Process is perceived as fair.

The areas in need of change, as indicated by the responses to the questionnaires and interviews are as follows:

- Training should be in place for those aspiring to the positions of director and superintendent.
- Greater involvement by teachers in selection for all positions.
- Training for interviewers.
- Greater standardization across the board of procedures for the selection of department heads.

With respect to affirmative action, this board has an unusual record of achievement in getting women promoted, even though a policy is not in place. This was achieved because of the extensive training component of the selection process. All interested personnel are encouraged to take the leadership courses; also, the screening process has been successful in selecting those with high potential in leadership. Hence, with the philosophy of seeking the best people, the board has

ended up with a large number of women administrators as principals and vice-principals, especially at the elementary school level. Nevertheless, many have admitted that there is still room for improvement. An affirmative action policy, plan and formal procedures seem needed at this time to ensure that the practice spreads throughout the system at all levels.

How does this board fare against other boards in the province? In terms of perceptions of those who have been promoted, the selection procedures employed by the Livingstone Board and those employed by other boards are similar -- both groups are quite satisfied with the procedures as presently practised. However, considering the potential bias of those who have been successful in promotion, as well as those responsible for the promotions, this could be expected.

Nevertheless, there are significant positive features in the Livingstone procedures that are not evident in many other boards. These include:

1. Pre-application leadership training programs.
2. Diagnostic feedback directed to further education and training.
3. Clear, well-communicated procedures.
4. Clear identification of system and school needs and the application of criteria to objectives.
5. Close relationship of policy to practice.

The areas of recommended change grow out of a philosophy of "involvement of those affected by decisions", that is, many respondents desire greater involvement of teachers and principals in the selection of senior administrators. However, there are those who believe that this philosophy does not fit the culture of the organization at this time. Hence, what is best is still to be debated.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For purposes of analysis leading to recommendations, key factors have been selected which, in the opinion of the researchers, contribute both to an understanding of the selection and promotion policies and procedures presently in operation in Ontario school boards, and to the rationale supporting the recommended changes.

Several questions led to identification of the key factors: (1) who is involved in contributing to and/or making the selection and promotion decisions and what roles have the most (least) influence; (2) how is information on the candidates processed, that is, what information is requested; what procedures are used to assess the information; what criteria are used; and who does the processing of information; (3) what are the key decision points, that is, at what point are candidates screened in and out; (4) what is the role of training; what training is undertaken for those who do the screening; what training is provided for those who aspire to promotion; and (5) what influence have affirmative action policies and guidelines had on the selection and promotion process and outcomes?

This chapter concludes with a set of six recommendations for changes in selection and promotion policies and procedures.

Persons Involved in Selection and Promotion

One of the concerns or reasons expressed by some of those who failed to be promoted has to do with who was involved in contributing to or making the promotion decision. "I knew I didn't have a chance with John on the interview

committee." "Because of the bad experience I had when Mary was my principal, there was no way I could ever get a good recommendation in this board." The central questions are, then, who is involved in the selection and promotion process, and what role do they play?

In the selection of department chairs, the key decision-maker is the principal of the school, and more specifically, the principal of the secondary school (department chairs were not found in elementary schools). Although in many cases selection teams for interviewing included other department chairs, teachers, vice-principal(s) and superintendent, the decision was the principal's to make. In fact, most boards left the entire set of procedures to the principal, that is, there were no written board policies or procedures for most boards. Each school (principal) was left to its own to devise the means for arriving at a recommendation for appointment to department chair. Obviously, approval for the recommendation was given at each level of the organization: area superintendent, superintendent of personnel or operations, director, and board of trustees. However, approval through the ranks usually was an automatic procedure.

With respect to the adoption and implementation of affirmative action and equal opportunity policies and guidelines, it is interesting to note that the Livingstone Board of Education (case study board), which has substantiated claims of the best record in the province, with respect to the promotion of women to the positions of department chair, vice-principal and principal, has not formally adopted an affirmative action policy. According to the data obtained in this study, the reasons for the board's success lie in the role modelling, career planning, and leadership training components of its promotion procedures. Obviously, as one would expect, the practice of these procedures seems to be much more important than simply the adoption of board policies.

In the selection of vice-principals and principals, the principal again played a key role in most boards. However, the explicit role reported in the appointment of department chairs was not as obvious in the selection of vice-principals and principals. Although the principal did not play an important role throughout the selection process, many boards required positive support in the way of a formal recommendation before a person would be considered for promotion to the vice-principalship. Some boards had "pre-consideration" interviews of applicants by the candidate's principal and area superintendent; these interviews were actually the first screening point in that applicants could go no further in the promotion process that year. Other boards relied solely on formal written recommendations from the candidate's present principal. These also served as the first screening point in that a negative recommendation meant that consideration was withdrawn. In other words, the approval of the principal was essential, for disapproval was an instant veto of the candidate. Other boards, however, in realizing that other information was needed, included the principal's recommendation as part of the total information on the candidate, but allowed the candidate to proceed to another stage in the process, usually an interview by committee. In this case, representation on the committee often included a principal(s), superintendent(s), trustee(s), and director.

In the case of promotion to a principalship, since the applicant is usually a vice-principal, the candidate's present principal's recommendation is critical. There are, however, boards that recognize the potential weakness of this recommendation: "It is difficult to get an honest evaluation of an ineffective vice-principal from a principal, when the principal knows that person will continue to work as his/her vice-principal". Nevertheless, in most boards, the principal serves as the gatekeeper, that is, the one who can most influence those who eventually decide on the acceptance or non-acceptance of the candidate. In most cases, the actual decision for recommendation comes from the final interview committee.

This committee often consists of representatives from several levels of decision-making in the school board: principal, superintendent, director, trustee. More often than not, there is an attempt, by those on the committee, to share influence equally; however, as in many situations requiring decisions, those with the highest rank have the most influence.

Information Processing

The information requested and procedures used to process the information together constitute the essential ingredients of the decision-making model used to select future administrators. The information requested relates directly to both the explicit and implicit criteria used to asess the candidates, as well as the validity of the information. The procedures used relate directly to the due process nature of the model of decision-making used to make selections, as well as to the reliability of the information used to make judgements. Together they relate directly to the practicality and credibility of the selection process. Hence we have four criteria for assessing the quality of the information processing stages: (1) validity, (2) reliability, (3) practicality, and (4) credibility.

Information Requested

For most positions the information requested came in many forms: letter of application, application form, résumé, written reports from previous supervisors, written self-evaluation, references, and statement of candidate's philosophy of education. It was interesting to note that the most used types of information considered very valuable to those promoted recently, and to those involved in promotion procedures, were often those that least met the criteria stated above. In the case of the senior administrators, for example, statement of candidate's philosophy, written reports from previous supervisors and résumé were considered

very valuable. The first two sources seem to negate the validity and reliability of the information, given that one can "create a fiction of philosophy", and that a supervisor seldom, if ever, writes a negative assessment of a fellow professional. Further, the credibility of the information is suspect. The use of résumés is quite understandable given the value of "track record" as a criterion for selection, especially at the senior levels of administration. In the case of the junior administrative positions, written self-evaluation was also considered most valuable. At this point one must question the use of self-disclosure in a competitive process in which it is predetermined that there will be winners and losers.

When asked to recommend the types of information that should always be used, résumé, references and interviews emerge as highest. In summary, it seems that the respondents like what is being done at the present time, that is, relying on the traditional types of information: résumés, references, and interviews. Although many indicated the need for change, the recommendations for change were not in the types of information to be used in selection and promotion practices.

Procedures for Processing Information

The methods used to handle and process information are rather standard across all positions. Letters of application are often accompanied by completed application forms. The kinds of information requested on the forms do not vary much: name, address, education, positions held, certifications, awards and honours, and statement of philosophy of education. Assessment of the letter of application and the completed application form constitute one of the early decision points. Relevant education, experience and certification usually determine whether one gets beyond this point.

Some boards hold pre-application interviews or "meetings" with the principal and/or area superintendent (in the case of application for the position of vice-principal and principal). The information used to make the screening decision at this time is usually based on criteria similar to those indicated above: experience, certification, "track record" in the board, and often, philosophy of education.

The next stage for most boards for most positions is the interview with the interview committee. At this point, more often than not, all the written information on the candidate, including references and recommendations from immediate supervisors, is given to the committee. There is some variation among boards in the formation of the committees and in the procedures used. Most committees have not undergone any training and have not structured the interviews, either in terms of criteria, questions to ask or methods of scoring or assessing the interviewees. Some comittees are well organized, well schooled and have developed procedures to ensure high validity and reliability in the use of information for conducting the assessments.

The interview committee then recommends an individual or a list of candidates (sometimes ranked) to the director or to the board through the director. The actual selection or promotion decision and assignment to a school or senior administrative position is made either by the board or by the director with approval of the board.

In the selection of director, private consultant firms are sometimes employed. In this case, the consultants usually make the initial screening decisions (using an analysis of documentation and interviews) and recommend a short list to the board. The entire board or board committee then interviews the candidates and makes the final decision.

Criteria

Two of the questions asked in the study were directed to finding out what criteria are used and should be used in the selection of persons to fill positions of added responsibility. It was not surprising to find that similar criteria emerged as very important for all of the positions. These were interpersonal skills, decision-making skills, management skills, knowledge of the role, and "appropriate" philosophy. There were several predictable exceptions. One, teaching skills and curriculum-related skills were ranked high for department chairs; two, evaluation skills ranked higher in the desired (ideal) list than in the criteria that were being used at the time; and three, "appropriate" religious beliefs ranked very important for Roman Catholic separate school administrators. The explanation for the higher ranking of evaluation skills suggests that the accountability aspects of the administrators' responsibilities continue to be very important in that they require greater expertise and, perhaps time, than was previously thought. The assumption that (1) similar skills, (2) knowledge related to the specific role, and (3) attitudes and values that are consistent with those administrators and trustees who make selection and promotion decisions, are very important, irrespective of the level of administrative position in the school board, was confirmed by the data collected in this study.

Processors of Information

The processors of information all have a role to play in the selection decisions. For the position of director of education, the decision-making is shared between consultants and trustees or, in most cases, between a committee of trustees and the entire board. In some cases, input, in the form of suggested criteria, is asked of various groups (e.g., principals' local association); however, the actual processing of the information leading to a decision does not include any employees of the

board. There is one exception, when the outgoing director is asked to play a part in the process; this role is usually an advisory one.

For the position of superintendent, the key processor of information usually is the director. However, there are those boards (not in the majority) that do not use staff members in the selection decision. On the other hand, there are boards that allow the director to make the final decision; the board, in this case, simply approves the appointment. The general pattern, however, is to form a committee of the board, including the director. This committee receives the applications, conducts the interviews, and recommends a short list (from one to three or four) to the total board; the total board, then, interviews the candidates named on the short list and makes the appointment.

For the position of vice-principal and principal, the selection patterns are more variable. The range can include an interview with the director (and one or more superintendents) to a comprehensive set of procedures that includes (1) attending a board-sponsored leadership course, (2) a preliminary interview with a superintendent and principal, (3) a review of all documents by a committee of principals and supervisory officers, (4) an assessment centre (more to be said of this later), (4) an interview with a committee which includes principals, federation representatives, superintendents, director, and trustees, and (5) an interview with the superintendent of personnel and/or director of education. Since the vice-principalship is the key promotion for one who wants to undertake a career in school administration, it seems appropriate that careful and extensive consideration be used in making this appointment. This was acknowledged by the senior administrators of those boards that have developed rather comprehensive selection and promotion procedures for this role. A second reason given for the extra care taken for this role is the difficulty in removing someone from an administrative position once appointed. One appropriate comment made by one

director to candidates was that if any error was to be made in the selection of vice-principals, it would be, hopefully, on the side of excellence.

Few boards have any policy or formal board-wide procedures for the selection of department chairs. The procedures, generally, are left to the school principal to develop. Often a committee is appointed (including vice-principals, department chairs, teachers, and superintendent) to assist in the analysis of information about the candidates, including the interview. The decision, more often than not, rests with the principal.

Decision Points

The decision points in selection and promotion procedures are the points at which it is decided whether the candidate either goes on to the next step or is screened out of the process. In Figure 1, the "funnel" is a representation of the decision points and criteria found in some of the selection and promotion procedures in this study.

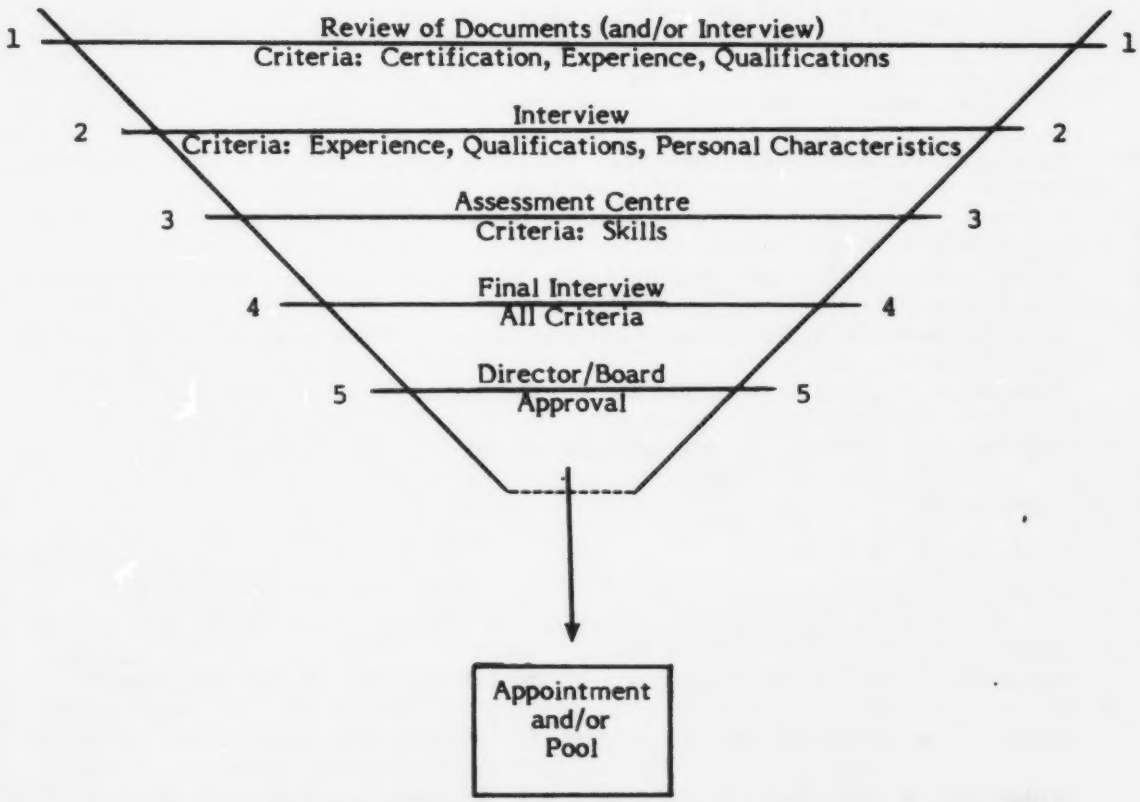
The initial decision (point 1 in the model) usually is based on rather objective information, such as certification, length of experience, and type of experience. Sometimes, however, the decision is made on policy or political grounds. For example, some boards permit all internal candidates for senior positions to go through all the steps in the process.

The second decision point sometimes is the last one. For example, in the case of the selection of department chairs, one interview was most often the only step that followed the review of submitted documentation. For other positions, a committee or an individual (e.g., the director) conducts a formal review of all the submitted documentation, including references obtained in writing or over the

phone and recommends a short list for the next step -- the interview. This recommendation constitutes decision point 2.

In the case of vice-principals and principals, a third screening occurs after candidates have gone through the assessment centre set of procedures. Performance in assessment centre activities then becomes the basis for deciding who goes on to the next step and who does not. For other boards that do not use these procedures, the final interview constitutes decision point 3.

Figure 1: Decision Points



For boards using the assessment center, the final interview becomes decision point 4. This is followed by a recommendation to appoint the candidate to a position, or to place the candidate in a pool of acceptable (ready for promotion) candidates, to be appointed if a position is available.

The assessment centre procedures are not used in Ontario for the selection of superintendents and directors. For those who made the short list, the final interview is held after a review of all documentation. The final decision point for these senior administrators usually is the board decision to appoint.

Role of Training

There are two ways to include training in selection and promotion procedures: one, the training of those who are involved in the procedures, that is, those who contribute to the selection decision, and two, the training of those who aspire to promotion.

The results of this study revealed that little has gone on in the way of the training of those involved in selection and promotion procedures. What this means is that any systematic method of assuring the use of valid and reliable information in the assessment of the candidate was noticeably absent. Many experienced administrators and trustees might not see this as a problem, given their extensive experience in selecting administrators. The concepts of validity and reliability, however, are critical in the analysis of information leading to comparative judgements.

Validity, in this situation, refers to the job-relatedness of the information. Reliability refers to the consistency of the information. If the assessors do not arrive at a consensus on the system for valuing the information, then the probability is high that the candidate will be judged on the basis of different information using different weights for same or different criteria. Further, if the information requested is not job-related, then the candidate is judged on criteria that have little or nothing to do with the job. Obviously, those involved in requesting and judging information on candidates need to get together in some

formal way, preferably with some assistance or professional training, in order to bridge the gap between the decision-makers in terms of choice and relative value of information.

For example, the results of the study showed that most respondents consider "appropriate" philosophy of education one of the most important criteria to be used in selecting an administrator (at any level). This explains why so many application forms include a request for a statement of philosophy of education. However, if this response is given to a range of readers without prior training in assessing (training to include arriving at consensus on the correct answers), then one can expect low reliability (consistency). This can be interpreted to mean that any answer can be right or wrong, or adequate or inadequate. If this is so, then one must ask "why ask the question?"

Another obvious example is the case of interview committees that have not met until the interviews start. Training for interviewers should include achieving consensus on criteria, on questions to be asked, on "best" answers, and on scoring procedures. This process is necessary to ensure that, as much as possible, candidates are being judged on similar information against criteria using similar scoring procedures.

Another highly rated source of information indicated by the results of the study was references from one's previous and present supervisor. This being the case, how does one justify using these data when the information presented is always positive or non-specific or both? Some administrators indicated that the validity and reliability of this information is suspect if supervisors cannot feel secure in the confidentiality of recommendations. Further, although there are those who do give accurate, but positive responses, how does one separate the truth from the "cover-up". One answer is to include procedures that increase the

potential for obtaining highly consistent (reliable) data. One recommendation or reference is not enough. Reliable data must have multiple sources and must refer to multiple events. This is why many boards have developed comprehensive procedures. The intent of these boards is to obtain as much information on a candidate as possible, given the limitations of time and resources.

Training for Promotion

Many boards have extended their programs for the training of administrators and for those who aspire to these positions. There are several reasons: (1) because of the relatively long period of declining enrolments, which led to a history of few promotions, coupled with the low number of retirements in past years, re-training of present encumbents has been institutionalized in some boards to "keep administrators current"; (2) since most boards prefer it and do promote from within, it is considered essential to develop board-sponsored "leadership" programs to ensure a pool of highly qualified candidates, and (3) because of the large number of administrative openings expected in the next few years, boards want to ensure that the pool of qualified candidates is large enough to fill all positions.

The range of programs is quite extensive. Some examples are (1) training opportunities (sometimes compulsory) for all persons in positions of added responsibility, (2) an intensive training program for a select few, who have been chosen for their leadership potential, and who are ready to embark on an administrative career path with the board, and (3) introductory leadership programs for anyone who wants to apply. The trend is to increase opportunities for those who chose to increase their potential for promotion; in fact, in some boards, attendance and success in performance at these sessions is an unwritten (sometimes written) requirement for consideration in promotion.

Affirmative Action

The results of this study show that a large majority of respondents felt that affirmative action considerations made very little, if any, difference in the way the selection procedures were implemented. This could be interpreted in at least two ways: (1) the procedures were conducted in such a manner that sexual preferences had little or no influence on the way the procedures were conducted, as well as on the outcome of the selection process, and (2) the procedures were conducted in such a way that adherence to the guidelines of affirmative action policies was not sustained and that sexual discrimination was prevalent. Of course, there was no evidence to support either interpretation. However, in examining other data, one can see implications for action to be taken to further the intent of affirmative action policies in bringing about more equitable distribution of the sexes in positions of added responsibility in school boards.

The majority of those involved in the selection of persons for positions of responsibility were male and the majority of those selected were male. Given that this study dealt with the promotion of persons to positions of added responsibility, and given the ranks one must go through to reach the most senior administrative positions (e.g., director and superintendent), it is understandable that few of these positions would be filled by women. Certainly in Ontario, one does not skip over one or more ranks, except in rare and special circumstances. One moves generally from vice-principal to principal to superintendent to director. Hence, if there are few women vice-principals, there will be few women promoted to principal; similarly, if there are few women principals, there will be few women promoted to superintendent.

The study also showed that a relatively low percentage of women were selected for all positions, including the department chairs and vice-principalships.

This means then that there will be few women promoted to the senior administrative positions in the years to come. The data in this study indicate that approximately one-fourth of the persons promoted to department chair and vice-principal were women. Unless the selection procedures do a complete reversal, that is, promote only 25 per cent of the men in the next few years, the present ratio of men to women in administrative positions in school boards will continue. However, these data might not hold for long if the number of positions opening up in the next few years is very large and if drastic change in the selection of persons for promotion takes place in the next few years.

Recommendations for Changes

The ideal model is one that adheres to the criteria of validity and reliability in the use of information, and of practicality and efficiency in the use of human resources. Further, it must include procedures that take into account the unique political, historical and cultural aspects of the particular school board. With these criteria in mind, and relying on the data generated in this study, as well as that taken from research and professional writings, recommendations will be made which can be applied to any of the school boards in Ontario. For some boards, few changes need be made. For many boards, substantial changes need to be undertaken.

Recommendation 1

Each board should develop, and communicate widely among its staff and trustees, policies and procedures for the selection and promotion of persons to all positions of added responsibility.

This study concluded that most boards do not have policies and procedures in place for most of these positions. Ad hoc procedures have been developed as the need arises.

Recommendation 2

Each board should include training programs for all those involved in selection and promotion procedures.

It is unrealistic to expect staff members and trustees to conduct valid and reliable asessments and judgements with little or no prior knowledge and assistance and, often, with less-than-adequate procedures in place.

Recommendation 3

Each board should include training programs for all those who are in positions of added responsibility, as well as those who are interested in an administrative career with the board.

Several boards have extensive training programs which have proven to be successful in preparing interested and qualified staff for promotion. Given the large number of positions opening in the coming years, all boards should assume responsibility for ensuring a substantial pool of qualified candidates, from which to choose, for every position.

Recommendation 4

Each board should develop procedures for including additional input in the choice of criteria to be used in selections and promotions. Further, when appropriate, the

inclusion of representatives from lower level personnel in the decision-making procedures should be undertaken.

The results of the study indicated that superordinates play the major role at each of the decision points. Greater involvement of subordinates was recommended for selection at all levels, from department chair to director.

Recommendation 5

Each board should make every attempt to ensure that valid and reliable information is used in assessing and judging candidates. This can be achieved by discarding procedures which rely on subjective judgements, and installing procedures which reduce opportunity for subjectivity and bias.

Several procedures are recommended:

5.1 Develop structured forms to be used by referees. These forms should ask for specific behavioural descriptions of outcomes contributed to and/or achieved by the candidate.

5.2 Train the supervisors to write recommendations that provide evidence of outcomes which are specifically related to the criteria stated for the position.

5.3 Develop and employ assessment centre procedures which obtain evidence of the candidate's job-related skills and which ensure high reliability in judgements of the candidate's abilities.

5.4 Train interviewers to develop procedures which obtain valid and reliable information from candidates and which employ assessment techniques that reduce individual bias.

5.5 If using self-evaluations by candidates, use structured forms which ask for specific behavioural descriptions of outcomes contributed to and/or achieved by the candidate; also, ensure that the form refers to the criteria stated for the position.

5.6 If asking for a statement of philosophy of education, train the readers to score the responses to obtain high validity and reliability. Further, develop procedures which provide the opportunity to obtain additional evidence to confirm (or not confirm) the candidate's statement.

Recommendation 6

Each board should undertake pro-active recruiting and pre-application training opportunities which increase chances that qualified women will apply for the supervisory and administrative positions.

Since the normal progression of promotion starts with the lowest levels of supervision and administration, and since the percentage of women being promoted at these levels is far below that of men, boards interested in reaching the goal of equality in the number of men and women in positions of responsibility at all levels, should be taking initiatives directed to reaching that goal.

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Final Comment

The results of this study indicate that those who have been promoted in the past five years, and those who have been involved in the promotion process in the past two years are generally satisfied with the selection and promotion procedures employed by their board. Further, they are generally satisfied with the results, that is, they believe that much of the time, the best people get the positions. Unfortunately, it was not possible to obtain the perceptions of those who have never been promoted and who have never served in any capacity in the process. However, the results do show that most of those promoted had applied and been rejected before, and some many times. Therefore, their perceptions do, to some extent, represent those who have experienced failure.

Another point to consider is that selection and promotion policies and procedures do change over time. Many boards indicated that they were reviewing their present policy and/or procedures. Some indicated that they were aware of the need for change. Further, many boards were considering or had already introduced assessment centre procedures. Two boards have been using the assessment centre in a major way for four years; some boards had introduced some of the activities. In addition, 19 boards (5 Roman Catholic separate, 14 public) have contracted with the OISE/UWO Centre to send candidates through the assessment process. At this writing, 59 candidates had been assessed.

In summary, many persons in some boards are pleased with what has been going on. There are others who are in the process of making changes, many of which are directed to the recommendations listed above. With the rapid increase in the number of openings in positions of added responsibility, it can be anticipated that the improvement of selection and promotion procedures will become a high priority for all boards. Hopefully, the results of this study, along with the

recommendations emerging from the data and the writings of professional educators, will assist those interested in evaluating, and, if necessary, changing their policies and procedures for selection and promotion.